

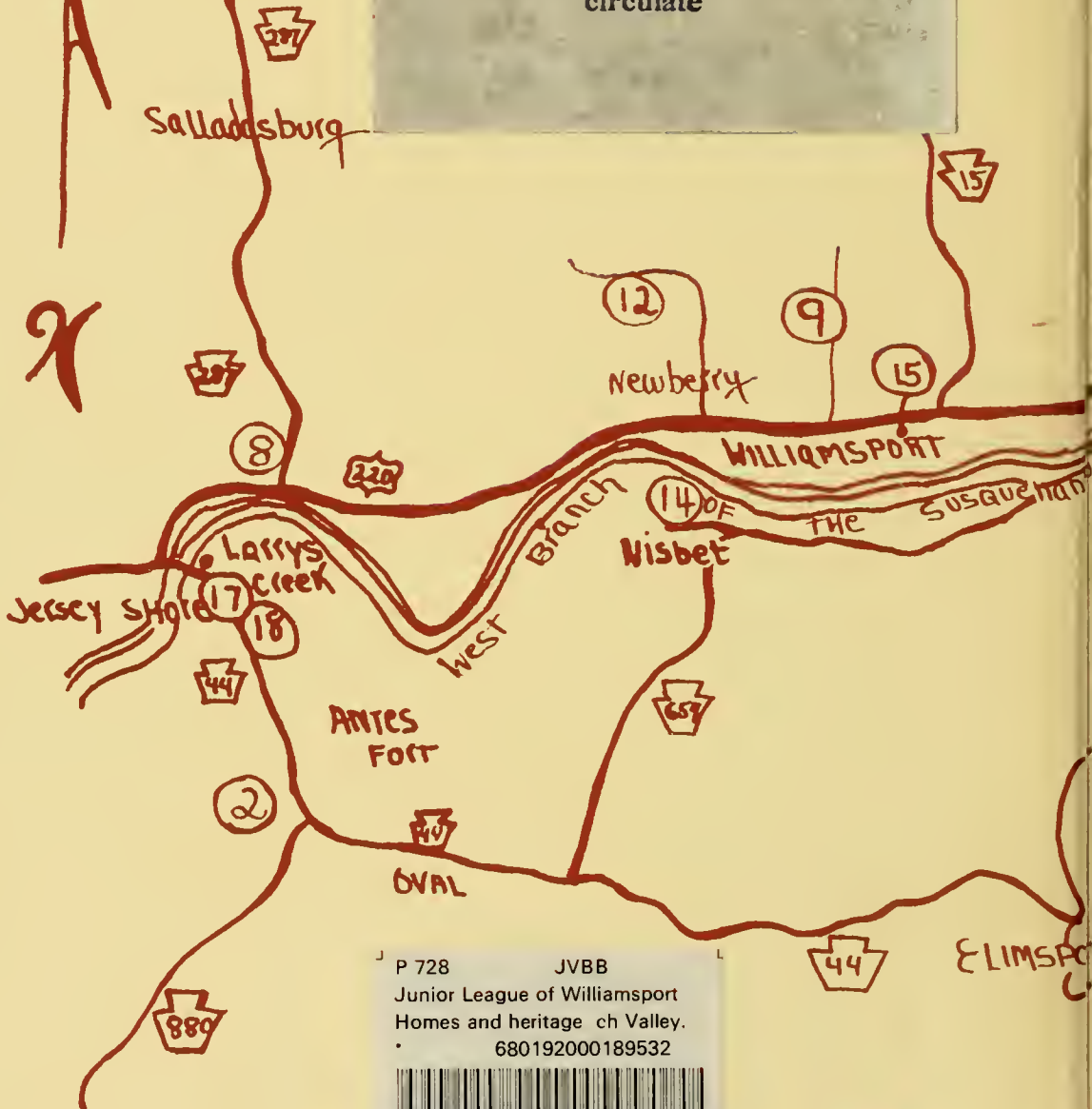
HOMES *and*
HERITAGE

of the
West Branch Valley



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- 6—Mendenhall
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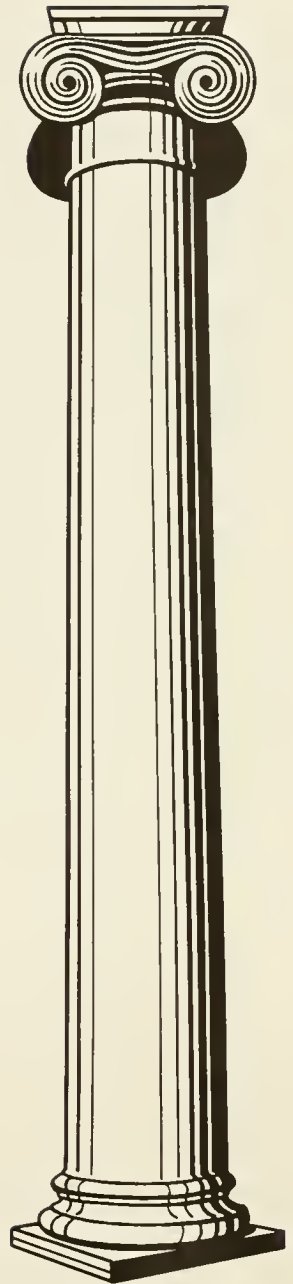


- 10—The Nathaniel Burrows House
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- 17—The Stewart House
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Published By

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF WILLIAMSPORT, INC.
WILLIAMSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

Present Home Owners

Mrs. Sheila B. Schaeffer, *Muncy Farms—Longreach*
Mrs. Stanley Barclay and Mrs. Myron Sweitzer, *Lochabar*
Mr. and Mrs. Elwood F. Brant, *House of Many Stairs*
Mr. and Mrs. H. Frederick Neece, *Wolf Run*
Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Stoevers, *Mendenhall Farm*
Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Muir, *Rose Hill*
Dr. and Mrs. Donald Shelley, *The John Knox House*
Mrs. Eva Glosser, *Springside*
Mrs. Layton King, *Nathaniel Burrows House*
Mr. and Mrs. George Hunter, *The George Bennet Farm*
Mrs. Amelia D. Youngman, *The Youngman Home*
Assemblyman and Mrs. Alvin C. Bush, *Wyno Farms*
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Plankenhorn, *The Gibson Farm*
Mr. Al Ferrari, *Hermance House*
Mr. and Mrs. Roy L. Wenner, *The Charles L. Lyon Farm*

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W.C.C.

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Foreword

IN THIS LOVELY little volume, the Williamsport Junior League introduces today's generation of Lycoming Countians to yesterday's gracious living. These pages enrich local history by preserving a pictorial as well as descriptive record of the finest examples of architecture accumulated in Lycoming County since Samuel Wallis erected his frontier and fortified home along the Susquehanna River (near present-day Hall's Station) in 1769.

We can speak only words of praise for the material included in this book. But we confess regret that something of this type was not undertaken a half century ago when such magnificent places as the Rawle mansion were still landmarks of our culture. We've lost beautiful estates through neglect which would properly have belonged in this volume had they not been allowed to deteriorate in recent decades.

Here is a book which should be included in every library that makes any pretense of recording the history of Lycoming County. The Williamsport Junior League has performed a valuable public service in preparing it.

Paul G. Gilmore
Editor, the *Sun-Gazette*
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

November 20, 1967

Dedicated to

MARGARET BINGHAM CORYELL

for her devotion to the heritage of this valley
and her vital participation in the life of the community

Preface

THE RESURGENCE of interest in the older and historic homes of our country is not surprising or without merit. Everywhere people are realizing that these homes have fascinating histories and that their architecture is worthy of being saved.

From the past much can be learned and adapted to the present and future. Investigating the history of homes and the people who inhabited them brings history to life and kindles in us a sense of our rich heritage—a heritage that belongs to every American no matter when his forebearers landed on these shores. Where else can the feeling of eras gone by be recaptured more vividly than by viewing the homes that portray the personalities and characters of earlier generations who lived in them?

The West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River has much to contribute to the historical significance of our nation. The men and women who came to settle in this untamed region left their imprint on the pages of our history.

To enlighten others of the existence of our valuable historic homes and to create the desire to maintain and restore these homes as well as other structures that give us glimpses to our past has been our aim. When so many doubt the security of our future there is comfort and wisdom to be gained by looking into the past.

Inspired by the wealth of subject matter in this valley, members of the Public Affairs Committee of the Williamsport Junior League, Inc. began in 1965 to compile information on certain homes. These homes were chosen because of their age, architecture, and historical significance. Mere antiquity is not the only reason for selection of a structure for historic preservation. Period styles, identification with the lives of famous personages or events in local and national history are to be considered. Quaint structures such as log cabins or sod houses may be as relevant and important as the mansion and estates of the past.

The committee presented its report at a Junior League meeting and it was received with so much enthusiasm that the decision was made to make the presentation available to the public. A subsequent development was the creation of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Junior League. It was this committee that presented highly successful series of illustrated lectures of Historic Homes in Lycoming County to many groups and organizations in the county. An interesting fact is that none of the members serving on these committees is a native of Williamsport or its environs.

The culmination of the lecture series is the publication of this book. Countless hours of research were spent; local historians contacted; the present home owners interviewed, and many books, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings were found and read in the accumulating of the material for this text.

During the course of this research, all facts and dates were checked as thoroughly as possible. Should the reader discover a discrepancy, it is not due to carelessness. Some of the stories related down through the years may have been altered. Also, some of the records and books used as reference sources are not always in agreement.

It is our hope that this book will be but a beginning in the continuing project of preserving our homes and landmarks and thus our heritage for generations to come. Memories flicker; those upon whom we rely to tell us tales of families of by-gone eras pass from the scene. The printed word remains as our best means to perpetuate our history and to stimulate the desire for more knowledge.

The Editors—

Constance M. Snyder (Mrs. Charles W.)

Margaret T. Young (Mrs. Allan N., Jr.)

Acknowledgements

Cooperation is the keystone of this book. Without the splendid response from the owners of the homes herein depicted, this publication would not be possible. They gave true witness to their own strong convictions concerning the preservation of our heritage through these homes by giving unstintingly of their time for interviews and by opening their homes for interior photographs. They are to be commended and thanked for all their efforts in our behalf as well as for the invaluable contribution their distinctive homes are to the West Branch Valley.

There are others who must be cited for their assistance.

Miss Susan Schaeffer for her capable and professional assistance in the initial editing of this manuscript.

Samuel Dornsife whose expert knowledge of architecture and interior decorating enabled us to choose more wisely the homes portrayed in this book.

Miss Margaret Bingham Coryell, Mrs. Morris Housel, Mrs. Robert Cochrane, and John Youngman, Sr., who were excellent sources for much of the information that seemed to be so elusive.

Naomi Woolever, Social Editor of the Sun-Gazette, for accepting for publication the stories of several of these homes and thus stimulating the interest of the general public.

Grit Publishing Company and The Sun-Gazette Publishing Company for finding and providing us with appropriate articles from their files.

The staff of the James V. Brown Library Reference Room and Pennsylvania Room for pleasant and efficient aid in locating all manner of materials.

The City Planning Commission for the assistance given in the assembling of the material.

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The Honorable Thomas Wood for his interest and encouragement.

Miss Miriam Shollenberger for her literary advice which helped to improve the script.

Donald Hartman for the many long hours spent taking the excellent colored slides for the lecture series, several reproductions of which appear in this book.

Stanley L. Hill, professional photographer, for many of the outstanding photographs.

Members of the Muncy Historical Society, the Lycoming County Historical Society, and the Jersey Shore Historical Society for their enthusiastic encouragement.

The members of the Public Affairs Committee and subsequent Historic Preservation Committee who instigated this project, formulated and presented the lecture series which, in turn, led to the publication of this book: Mrs. Allan N. Young, Jr., chairman; Mrs. Joseph Bendel, Mrs. John L. Bruch, Jr., Mrs. James C. Humes, Mrs. Karl W. Landmesser, Mrs. Charles W. Snyder, Mrs. Lewis M. Soars, Mrs. Marshall Welch, Jr., Mrs. Richard P. Westervelt, Mrs. Victor E. Wise.

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Muncy Farms — Longreach 1769

Muncy Farms—Longreach

MAJESTIC ELMS shade the stately stone home recognized as the oldest in the West Branch Valley. Located at Hall's Station, it was built by Samuel Wallis in 1769.

When Wallis arrived in 1768 to construct this Muncy farm home, the valley was extremely dark because it was densely forested. For this reason, it was necessary to quarry the stone for the house on Bald Eagle Mountain and to drag it across the frozen Susquehanna on sleds.

Originally one-and-one-half stories high, the house is now two-and-one-half stories with pillars across the front; the exterior walls, once covered by stucco (now removed), are three feet thick. Three additions have been made to the house. The one, since removed, was brick and of the Victorian period and did not harmonize with the Colonial design of the rest of the house. With the removal of this addition, there remains on the second floor a door to nowhere affectionately termed "the mother-in-law door"; there is now a flagstone terrace where the addition once stood. In 1927, the owners added a section to the west end of the house and installed a swimming pool behind it. The entire house now has twenty-seven rooms, not counting the gallery hall, but including baths. These, the pantry and the laundry, are the only rooms without fireplaces.

The front door of the 1820 addition opens into a handsome gallery hall which has ceilings thirteen feet high. The most impressive feature of the hall is the wide colonial stairway which winds up to the third floor. The handrail is of mahogany and along the side of the staircase are delicate scrolls carved out of solid wood.

Other changes reflect the home's age and history since it was built two centuries ago. On the first floor, the original section's partitions have given way to create the huge library-living room in the present home. Its distinguished appearance owes much to the rich color of the panels of chestnut and beams of oak. The 1936 flood brought three feet of water into the lower stories, warping the beautiful oak floors so much that many of the boards had to be split.

A shipper and speculator from Philadelphia, Samuel Wallis purchased the land from William and John Penn. This tract of land called Longreach extended in a direct line for six miles on both sides of the Susquehanna River between Muncy and Loyalsock Creeks. Subsequent additions to his estate made Wallis one of the largest landowners in the country. In 1794, there were living on the immediate estate thirty-five persons: Wallis's family, including his wife, seven children, his brother-in-law and his wife, nieces and nephews; a schoolmaster, a surveyor, and about twenty servants. Most of the servants were Germans who were indentured to Wallis; he had bought their services in Philadelphia. An interesting note is that Michael Ross (the surveyor who laid out Williamsport) came to the farm in 1772 at the age of thirteen and directed some of the work there until 1779 at which time he was presented by Wallis with the one hundred acres which was to become Williamsport.

To illustrate the self-sufficiency of the estate, the tenants provided their own beef, pork, mutton, fowl, and caught game and shad in the fields and streams. They also made linen and wool goods, soap, candles, and maple sugar. The land was rich in wood, limestone, and streams. Samuel Wallis oversaw this activity almost like a medieval baron. Nevertheless, he still had time to join with others in forming the first Quaker Meeting in the West Branch Valley.

In the summer of 1778, just before the Wyoming Massacre, Indian war parties fell upon the West Branch settlers and drove them from Great Island (Lock Haven) back to Wallis's house and to Fort Muncy, which was located just a few hundred yards from this house. Colonel William Hepburn, who was in charge of Fort Muncy, had been ordered to see that the settlers living from Muncy to Antes and Horn's Forts (Jersey



Compare this photograph with the home as it appears today. The stucco and partitions on the front have been removed, the main entrance changed; these and other alterations have enhanced the home's original architecture.



The formal gallery in the 1820 addition was designed by R. Brognard Okie, an architect who specialized in restorations, who planned the extensive remodeling undertaken by the Brocks.

Shore) were warned of the impending danger. Robert Covenhoven, "the West Branch Valley's Paul Revere," and a companion volunteered for this duty. Since the house and fort at Muncy could not withstand an outright attack, Wallis, his family, and the settlers fled to Sunbury's Fort Augusta in what was to be known later as "The Big Runaway." For several years, the homeless families remained at Fort Augusta, some never to return to their homesteads.

When Wallis returned to his home after the danger had passed, he found everything flammable in the house destroyed; the walls and timbers, however, were still sound and the house was repaired.

During the Revolutionary War, Wallis appears to have cleverly played with both sides. Known to the British by his code name, "the Gentleman from Philadelphia," he worked for Benedict Arnold, sending his intelligence reports to British generals and making any money he could out of shipping the British army of occupation food to feed its men and so to carry on the war. His house became a center of frontier intrigue, because it proved to be a safe and secret spot for meetings. Little did Wallis's neighbors suspect that he was covertly siding with the Indians and Loyalists against them—the extraordinary Quaker conspiring with the Mohawk.

"But, in Philadelphia, Wallis went on expertly pretending to be a Whig," favoring the Revolution, and accepting a commission.¹ He remained unsuspected throughout the war, and, in 1782, he returned to his manor, having become immensely wealthy as a result of his secret dealings.

Because of Wallis's extensive knowledge of the Wilderness, he became a buying agent for the Holland Land Company in association with Judge James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Soon Wallis's financial affairs became complicated as he overextended himself in land purchases. He made an effort to secure the payment of a large amount of money owed him by Wilson. Wallis pressed the judge one evening to sign a paper whereby the entire amount was to be paid in cash. Wilson, however, did not affix his signature, giving the excuse that he was tired and would sign the next morn-

¹ Secret History of the American Revolution by Carl Van Doren.



The magnificent stairway rises to the third floor. To the right of the first landing is the mother-in-law door. The grandfather's clock was made by J. E. Caldwell and Company, of Philadelphia.



Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. Brock grace the walls of the dining room. Above the fireplace is a portrait of Charles Hall, an early owner of Muncy Farms and after whom Hall's Station is named. The pedestal banquet table is of the regency period and was brought from Ireland. The chairs are camel-back Chippendale and the sideboard is Hepplewhite.



Focal point of the chestnut-paneled library-living room is this handsome fireplace.



The home at Muncy Farms — Longreach as viewed from the river.

ing. Wallis consented to the request, and when morning came, Wilson was found dead in his bed of an overdose of laudanum, an opium derivative.

Broken in spirit because his entire fortune was now endangered, Wallis began a journey to Philadelphia. While en route, he stopped at an inn and was lodged in a room whose previous occupant had died of Yellow Fever—just the day before. Unfortunately for Wallis, the bed linen had not been changed, nor the room cleaned. He contracted the disease and died a few days later in Philadelphia.

Without Wallis's management, his financial affairs could not be untangled and his widow died nearly penniless. The great stone house and four thousand acres were sold at sheriff's sale to Henry Drinker, of Philadelphia. He in turn sold it to Robert Coleman, of Lebanon, who gave it to his daughter, Elizabeth, on the occasion of her marriage to Charles Hall. The house remained in the immediate Hall family until one of the Halls used it as collateral to borrow money, which he unfortunately lost. After this incident, it passed to the Brock family (cousins of the Halls). It was Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. Brock who were responsible for restoring the house to the grandeur and elegance of the days when the spy, Wallis, came in from the cold.



Lochabar

"LAKE WHERE THE DEER SHED THEIR HORNS" is the literal translation of the romantic-sounding name—Lochabar.¹ This farm stands on a portion of the fifteen hundred acres of land which, in 1700, was sold to William Penn by the king of the Susquehanna or Andastes Indians for "a parcel of English goods." This was King WiDaagh, son of King Nippenose, after whom the valley was named. The original grants of the Penn family listed the land as Sawmill Tract No. 1724.

The Nippenose Valley held a strange and compelling attraction for the Indians. Only in the deep forest of Lochabar could the secret order of the Immortals (known as the O. O. T. T.) be celebrated by the Andastes. Those who would undertake this "mystic rite and blood-curling initiation" won their places with the Immortals. The tests were beyond belief: the initiates had to grope their way through underground passages; grapple with serpents and demons; fight their way through fire and brimstone; be encumbered with insurmountable weights and put into the Giant's Pool—to emerge, at last, as Immortals.

The conditions at Lochabar were unique—for only there could be found wolf dens forty feet in diameter and eighty feet deep, with perpendicular walls, with subterranean streams and caverns leading from one wolf den to another. And the Giant's Pool, with its vertical walls of limestone and depth of three hundred feet, over which one had to leap at a single bound is not to be found elsewhere.

A great lake or a series of connected lakes are said to lie in subterranean limestone caverns beneath one thousand acres of the valley. This theory has not been disproven altogether because all surface waters have a tendency to disappear into the ground again the moment they reach the valley basin.

¹ An early surveyor who was of Scottish descent bestowed similar names on other tracts of land he surveyed in that vicinity such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Argyll.

One immense spring bubbles up through a fissure in the rocks and it is the strange and beautiful emerald green pool formed by this spring that is called the Enchanted Spring. Steep, rocky banks covered with stately pine and hemlock trees surround this pool of mysterious beauty. The diameter of the pool measures about sixty feet. It was by the side of the Enchanted Spring that a sad and grieving King WiDaagh sat and meditated on his foolish transaction with Penn—the disposal of all this treasured land for a few wordly goods. As he sat and stared on the strange waters he often repeated this poem:

“For who but learns in riper years
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected.”²

It is said that the Enchanted Spring is haunted and this can be put to a test. If one stands on the south side of the pool and looks across the spring in a northeasterly direction at precisely three o'clock in the afternoon and gazes steadfastly at the face of the rocks which tower up from the water's edge, he will behold the gleaming eyes of the god of WiDaagh.

The pool flows into a swiftly running stream whose waters create sufficient force to have its power put to use. Once it was used to turn a very large millwheel, but (because of a decline in wheat production), the gristmill is no longer used. The Enchanted Spring feeds Antes Creek and once was used as the source of power for a hydro-electric plant that served the entire farm.



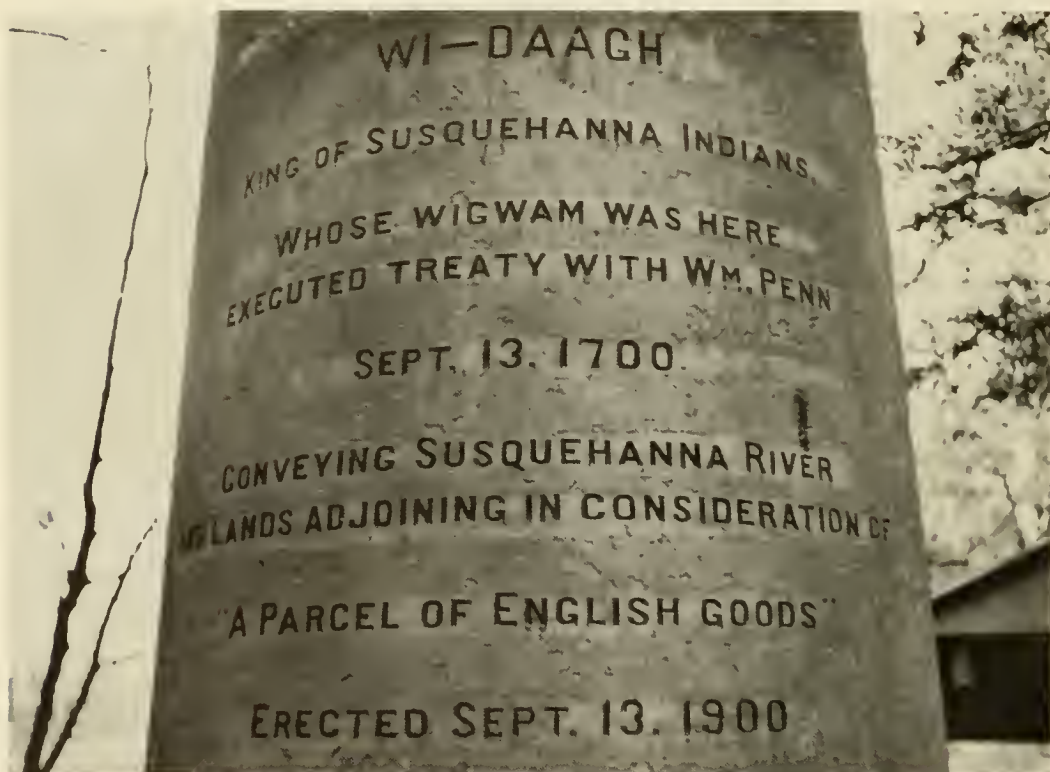
The Enchanted Spring.

Robert Forester laid the cornerstone of the main house in 1769, the same year in which Samuel Wallis began to construct his house. During the bloody conflicts which the settlers in Nippenose Valley had with the Indians, the sturdy stucco-covered stone house was known as "Forester's Fort." This was because the unprotected settlers in the valley frequently sought refuge within its strong walls.

A covered entry way extended from the front door of the house to two field-stone pillars (since removed) at the drive. The second floor dormers were added years later. Slave quarters were on the west of the main house and subsequently were changed to the east side. Most of the glass is the original and much of the interior is paneled in native chestnut. This type of wood is treasured now because in the 1920's a blight killed all native chestnut trees in this area.

Old court files of Northumberland and Lycoming Counties contain evidence that Forester transferred the tract to Joseph Galloway, of Maryland, and to William Patterson, of Cumberland County. Galloway, a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly from 1757 to 1774, a speaker of that body for eight years, and a member of the First Continental Congress, conveyed his share to Patterson in 1772.

In April, 1791, Abraham Betz acquired the property. Seven years later, J. Henry Antes, Jr. became the owner. His father, Colonel J. Henry Antes, had built a log fort (Antes Fort) on the bluff overlooking the mouth of the Nippenose Creek (renamed Antes Creek in his honor) about 1776 for the protection of the settlers. Colonel Antes built the first flouring mill in the valley and his grandson, Daniel, operated a sawmill at Lochabar.



Inscription on column erected to King WiDaagh.

The following owner was Colonel George L. Sanderson, founder of the Williamsport National Bank. He was the great-grandson of the famous Indian scout, Robert Covenhoven. In 1874, Colonel Sanderson built a cottage overlooking the Enchanted Spring, whose waters provide great trout fishing. During the years 1874 to 1910, he entertained many friends at "Little Lochabar" as the cottage came to be called. The cottage and spring are now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Clyde E. Carpenter, Sr. ☞

In 1876, Mrs. Emily Sanderson Cotter Carter and her father (Colonel Sanderson) unearthed a mystery when they made an amazing discovery in the basement of the house. The following excerpt from a letter written by Mrs. Carter describes the event:³

The story of the secret room at Lochabar is a true one. We wanted to place a radiator in the living room. My father went into the cellar and I remained on the first floor and he would knock on the ceiling and I would say move over—he finally said, "I am up against a wall." When the stones were removed, we found a good-size room approximately fifteen by twenty feet. It was cleared out. In the center, we found a long box-like pile of stone with a flat stone on top. This we did not remove for years. In the room we found a mess kit and other utensils. Last but not least of all, the bones of a body.

The body was that of a man who was twenty-three years old when he died. The mystery was partially solved when the sword which was found lying near the body was sent to London. There it was identified as being one used by Hessian soldiers in the Revolutionary War. We can only conjecture about the missing parts to the puzzle, but one theory concerning the young soldier's fate is that he was a deserter whom the rebels in that area captured. Having no method of securing their prisoner, the revolutionaries murdered the man. His sword now hangs over the living room fireplace at Lochabar—another reminder of the farm's varied and often awesome past.

Lochabar remains a lone survivor of the 1889 flood, for the small hamlet of Millport which had grown up around the prosperous farm was completely swept away by the waters and many of the town's inhabitants were drowned. Watson L. Barclay purchased Lochabar from Mrs. Carter in 1921.

The great stone column, which has become a landmark, was erected in 1900 by Colonel Sanderson. The column was removed under his instructions from the fire-ravaged Capitol Building in Harrisburg (1897) and was brought to Lochabar.

Forty-five feet high and weighing forty-one tons, the Ionic column is a memorial to King WiDaagh. Colonel Sanderson was deeply impressed by the history of Lochabar and of the Indians who had once inhabited his land. He and his friends re-established the celebration of the O. O. T. T. and they performed many of the mystic rites. The waters and the column still remind us of the forgotten Indian lore which gave the valley its significance in the days before the white man settled there.

"Search the earth's remotest borders,
Visit each and every star.
Yet you will not find its equal;
Nothing equals Lochabar!"²

² From "The Song of U-ri-on-tah" by Uriah Cummings.

³ This letter is in the possession of Mrs. Stanley Barclay.

The House of Many Stairs

Old house you are really very small.
Just big enough for love, that's all.

BETWEEN 1784 AND 1790 in Pennsdale, a little house hewn of logs "began to burrow its way into the hillside." Its builder did not concern himself with making the terrain conform to his notions of construction. Instead, he apparently admitted the superiority of nature's handiwork in the creation of the hill and did his best to adjust his own building to the contours of the land. The consequence is a delightfully meandering plan.

We might say that the House of Many Stairs was the first split level because no two rooms lie in the same plane. A floor plan reveals that at least four or five steps lead into and out from every room, and all seven stairways are visibly worn from use.

The original structure was built of lime—and fossilstone with pieces of shell still to be found in portions of the walls. The snows of many winters and suns of returning summers have mellowed the stone so that it has taken on a rose-colored tone.

At the present time, the house has a red tin roof which covers the old wooden one; the shutters are the original ones, as are most of the glass-paned windows. The middle window in the center of the upper story was once a doorway, but its intended use is now a mystery. Our only clue to its use may lie in the fact that the room behind it is lined with cupboards to hold muskets and in time of emergency, the room could be reached quickly via a ladder or outside stairs.

The oldest part of the house had two stories and an attic with the ground floor serving as a combination living room-kitchen. This room still contains the huge, almost square, fireplace including the large crane and kettle in which the cooking was done.



House of Many Stairs — Late Nineteenth Century.



The fireplace which served the original kitchen-living room is complemented with all manner of cooking utensils used in Colonial days.



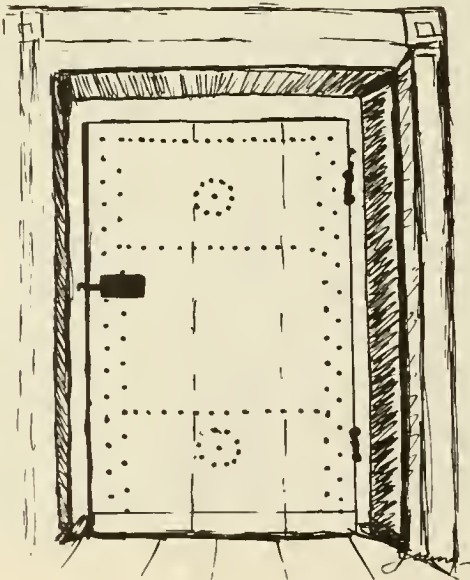
Reminiscent of the days when this room was part of Bull's Head Tavern is the bar with its collection of antique bottles. Note the three feet wide pine floorboards and the stairs leading into the second level as well as the enclosed section of another set of stairs.

On the fireplace floor are handmade bricks which have begun to crumble from the heat of the many fires which have been kindled over it. Over the mantelpiece hangs a Civil War bayonet from Harper's Ferry which the home's present owners found buried in the lawn of the house.

In the 1780's, the little building served both as a home and as a means of protection from the Indians, but, in 1790, it changed roles to become the "Bull's Head Tavern." The tavern was a way station for weary travelers on the stagecoach line and offered overnight accommodations. Then the old house fell on evil days; it became a hideout for horse thieves and highwaymen. Its jumble of stairways proved to be useful in order to baffle pursuing lawmen as the rogues sought escape. A keystone with the carved initials "JS" and "ES" (for John and Eva Stryker) and the date 1807 over the door signify the end of the home's days of infamy and its restoration as a private dwelling. In more recent years, the house was once again turned into an inn and then a tearoom.

The House of Many Stairs contains a secret place where escaping slaves traveling the Underground Railroad in the mid-nineteenth century could be hidden until it was safe to smuggle them on into Canada. Passage to the hideaway is through a small attic door at the top of a stairway. There is also a window there which could serve admirably as a lookout. Several years ago, thick pine floorboards were removed from this passageway in the attic, were refinished and placed in the upstairs hall. Throughout the house, the ceilings are seven feet high and the rooms small. An intricate design in nailheads may be found on the inside of the doors because Quakers believed these kept out evil spirits.

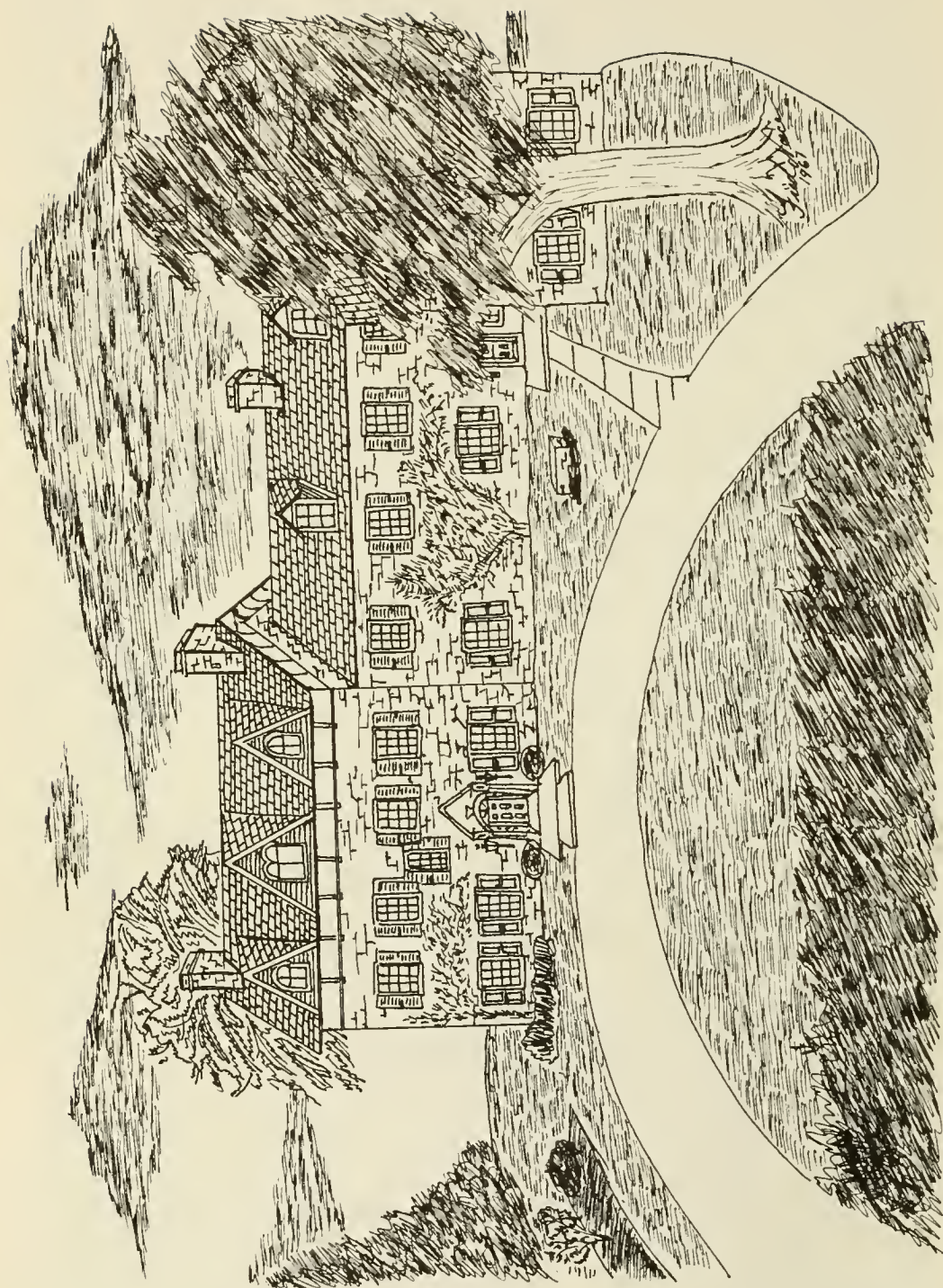
When purchased in 1936 by the Brant family from the Edward Morrisises, the building was finally returned to its original use as a home. The old building is fortunate in its present owners, for nothing has been changed architecturally. It has been preserved in its marvelous simplicity. In itself it is a living entity which has grown to meet expanding needs while it has continuously adapted to its environment. Though the house may lack the convenience of one with a formal design or the elegance of one with grander rooms, it nevertheless more than makes up for these things by its cozy intimacy and in the aura of the many aspects of its history.



Nailhead designs on door were thought by the Quakers to ward off evil spirits.



House of Many Stairs.



Frederick Neece's (son of the owner) sketch of the restoration of Wolf Run House.

Wolf Run House

IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, Thomas Ellis came to America in search of religious freedom. He was one of many who were led by George Fox to believe in the immediate presence of God in the individual. In a short time, the followers of Fox became known as Quakers. Thomas's grandson, William Ellis, brought his bride, Mercy Cox, to face the privations of frontier life in this unsettled valley.

His first home in the Muncy Valley was destroyed by the Indians during a raid. On the eve of that raid in 1778, Ellis rode as far as what is now known as Jersey Shore and back to Fort Muncy to warn the settlers of the impending danger. The settlers prevailed upon him to remain in the fort with them; they felt they needed his capable leadership. Finally, he consented to remain, but he had to explain this action to the Society of Friends later, for they did not approve of him staying in a fortified place. The next day, he returned to find everything in ashes—even the garden and orchard.

William Ellis acted as a surveyor of lands and was an agent and also a friend of Samuel Wallis. It wasn't until 1784 that he felt he was in a position to ask for the hand of Mercy Cox. Although they were married in February of 1785, the log cabin home he was building for her was not ready until October of that year.

During the years 1790 to 1791, he built a house in Pennsdales now referred to as Wolf Run House (named after the nearby stream). The home was constructed of limestone from the opposite ridges and from lumber timbered from their own forest land. It was a large home, designed to provide greater comforts and refinements for his growing family. (William's first three children were born in the log cabin). Several cottages were built to the west of the house for the Negro people employed on the farm. Slightly to the east of the house, near the stream, there was a gristmill.

Mercy and William Ellis had eleven children, one of whom, William Cox Ellis, became an attorney despite his father's efforts to interest him in managing this estate. He was sent to Congress in 1820-22.



A southern view of the home overlooking Wolf Run as it appeared in the late 1800's.



On the hearth of this fireplace is a bench that was made from a door step removed during the remodeling. This room originally was the winter kitchen.



Bricks removed from the cistern in the basement were used to good advantage in the remodeling of the present kitchen.

When William Ellis died in 1806, he left directions in his will for a cottage to be built for his wife Mercy. The original cottage was the center part of the present "Mount Equity" located in a field northwest of Wolf Run house. Mercy moved into this home in 1810 with six of her children. The seventh child still living, William Cox, married that year and subsequently moved into Wolf Run.

At the time of the War of 1812, grain could not be shipped and was stored on the first floor in the living room of the home. This caused the floors to sag. Restoration work resulted in iron beams being inserted through the small attic windows and metal rods were hung down through the walls to support the living room ceiling. Steel supports were added to the basement.

Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War, the house was used as a station on the Underground Railroad. The inhabitants of Wolf Run at this time were Rachel Ellis Haines, daughter of William and Mercy, and her husband, Jacob. The great ovens in the cellar at Wolf Run, which in Mercy's day was a basement kitchen, were used as hiding places in times of emergency. These protectors of runaway slaves drove them to the next station in their own carriages.

Descendants of Ellis continued to live in the house until 1948. During the late 19th century, plate glass was put in the downstairs windows and a large window at the east end of the living room was added. Since then, the interior of Wolf Run has been remodeled extensively and redecorated by its most recent owners, the Frederick Neecees. These owners are to be complimented because their efforts through preservation and restoration have saved a vital link to our past.

As one walks through its hallowed halls one can almost visualize the grain stacked in the living room, its floors protesting the stress. Perhaps with more imagination and a great projection back into time, one could feel the suspense and fright of the human cargo of the Underground Railroad hidden beneath its portals. Wolf Run is a house of history with voices in its walls for those who will hear.



The mahogany twin-steeped Gothic case clock made by Birge and Fuller of Bristol, Conn. in 1835 and the Hawks crystal candelabra on the mantel are among the antiques displayed in this extensively restored living room.



Pennsdale Friends Meeting

THE QUAKER COMMUNITY OF PENNSDALE of the late 18th century had little influence in the larger adjacent community of Muncy. In 1796, there were 70 Quaker families living in the Muncy Meeting Area. Until this group was granted the right to hold its own meeting, it met with the Catawissa Meeting. The Wallis Mansion was the site of the first Muncy Meeting.

In 1799, a Meeting House was built on land donated by John Carpenter, who lived nearby on a farm that came to be known as Mendenhall. William Ellis, owner of Wolf Run, was the first clerk of the Muncy Meeting.

Their intense loyalty to their religious beliefs and their concern for bringing up their children in the same faith kept them separated from their other neighbors. One of the factors that helped to make them self-sufficient was the fact that they had their own school.

For a time, the school was conducted in William Ellis's home. Then, in 1805, he gave the Meeting the land upon which the school was built. Among the first classmates of this school were Samuel Wallis, Jr., William Cox Ellis, and John Warner.

Many of the names important to the development of the West Branch Valley can be read on the tombstones of the cemetery adjacent to the Pennsdale Friends Meeting.

This building is referred to as the oldest house of worship in Lycoming County and is listed in the Catalog of Historical Buildings, Sites and Remains in Pennsylvania.

Beautiful in its simplicity of design and setting, this building that has been the home of Quaker Meetings through these many years stands as living witness to the moral and religious fiber of its founders and their descendants.



Springhouse at Mendenhall — The stone section is the original part built in 1797.

Mendenhall Farm

WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE of the Pennsdale Friends Meeting lies this lovely old home, harmonious with its setting of trees, pond, and springhouse.

A stone marker with the date 1797, and the names John and Elizabeth Carpenter, is evident in the springhouse. At the foot of the steps leading into this building is a small gravestone. The grave shelters the remains of one of the Carpenter children, the victim of an Indian raid. Inside the original section of the springhouse there is one room with a charming fireplace and a loft above.

The main house was constructed several years later, on or about the year 1804. This tract of land, which had been part of the Wallis Estate, at one time was twice its present size and the site of "Sister" houses.

Fossils are quite easily noticed in the stones of the home. The first floor of the original dwelling, consisting of three small rooms, each with a fireplace, has been changed into one warm and gracious room by the present owners, the Charles S. Stoevers. They have added a new section that blends with the architecture and atmosphere of the original home.

Three thousand three hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents was the purchase price Samuel Simpson paid to John Carpenter for his plantation in 1810. William Simpson, a brother of Samuel, was a surveyor for Samuel Wallis. He induced his three brothers, Phillip, Amos, and Samuel to join him in the Muncy area. The brothers were bachelors but eventually Amos married a widow and adopted her daughter, Louisa Atkinson. Samuel Simpson bought the adjacent farm and gave it to his adopted niece and



The interior of the springhouse appears today much as it did when it provided shelter for the Carpenter family for several years, until the main house was built. Though the task of restoring the springhouse is incomplete, the owners hope to utilize its atmosphere of quaintness and warmth as a guesthouse.

her husband, John Warner. They moved into the stone house in 1832 and lived there until 1861. Three of their children were Mary, Thomas A., and Benjamin.

In 1853, John Warner sold half of the farm with the other "sister" house (now owned by J. D. Wentzler) to his son, Thomas, and the eastern half of the farm was sold to his daughter Mary's husband, William S. Mendenhall. Thus Mary Warner Mendenhall was returned to the home of her childhood. The Mendenhall family retained possession of the farm until 1907, when it was sold to the Neuman family and later to Lee Miller. The home experienced varying eras of care and neglect.

Its present state attests to the fact that it is now owned by people who have a fine appreciation for the worthy things of the past and a strong desire to preserve this beauty for the future.



During the restoration of Mendenhall, the brick facing as well as plaster and wallpaper were removed revealing this exceptional fireplace, one of two in the present living room. The wall that held the third fireplace now has floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and cupboards. Layers of ceiling were removed to expose the original beams.

Rose Hill

“A beloved old brown house on the hill
Gave welcome to all with glad good will,
Gave understanding and sympathy, and
 beauty of flowers, bird, and tree—
There were jonquils for you and tarts for me,
And the robins had their own cherry tree,
Up at Rose Hill.”

Rosetta Schuyler Montgomery¹

SO DOES THE POET RECALL this lovely old home in Muncy that was built by Joshua Alder in 1820. The house now stands on two and one-half acres of land but the original tract bought by Thomas McCarty from the John Penns, elder and younger, was much larger.

Born in England and educated at Princeton, Joshua Alder, a chemist, first came to Muncy in 1810. He had married the eldest daughter of Leyson Lewis, of England, and he came to Pennsborough (Muncy) to supervise the establishment of the Lewis glass works at Mt. Lewis (Eagles Mere). This location was selected because sand deposits found there were ideal for glassmaking. The Lewis Glass Works flourished for several years before 1812, but financial difficulties—resulting from the hazardous transportation down the mountains, with resulting high breakage rates, forced the works to close.

¹ Now and Then: Volume IV, Number 10.



Rose Hill — 1820.



The original pine shutters hang on the windows of the living room while on the random width floor is an oriental rug. In the lower left corner an eighteenth century brass banded cellarette can be seen. The cobbler and his wife, Staffordshire porcelain figurines (1790) and the American mantel clock with works by Eli Terry (1820) are among the Muirs' remarkable antique collection.



The removal of the porches restored the home to its original Federal style.



The 1890 wooden addition has been brought into balance with the rest of the home by the marble and flagstone terrace.

Alder's first wife died in 1815 and, in 1817, because of disagreements with Mr. Lewis, he left his position as manager of the glass works and returned to Muncy. During the period 1810 to 1822, Mr. Alder built several homes in Muncy, as well as the first brick store. For a time, he was associated in business with his brother-in-law, J. H. Lewis.

In 1819, he returned to England and married the second daughter of Mr. Lewis, coming back to Muncy the same year. It is said that when the second Mrs. Alder first viewed her new home she was so enchanted by the wild rambling roses growing rampant over the land that she said, "Let this home be called 'Rose Hill'."

The house remained in the Alder family until the Malcolm Muirs purchased it in 1951 from John Jennings, a great-grandson of the Alders.

The original section of the house is in the Federal style characteristic of that period. The outer walls of brick are more than a foot thick. In 1890, a wooden addition was built, giving the house a "non-period" look. The entire home was restored and reconstructed for the Muirs by W. D. Schollenberger, an architect, in 1951.

An interesting story about Rose Hill concerns certain of the trees around the house. Dr. William Musser (who was the husband of Fannie Alder, Joshua's daughter) planted a tree when each of his children was born. A Norway spruce, planted in 1856 so to honor his daughter, Amy, is still standing. It is most unusual in formation and is reportedly the largest of its kind in this area.

Rose Hill is frequently referred to by area residents as the Alder-Musser House and its traditions of gracious hospitality and warmth are continued by its present owners.



The John Knox House

A SUPERB EXAMPLE OF RESTORATION and preservation is the John Knox House. Situated at the foot of a small hill along Larry's Creek near Salladasburg, this charming home has undergone many changes since it was built by John Knox in 1801. It is one of the oldest houses in Lycoming County which is still lived in today.

John Knox soon after arriving in Larryville in 1799, established ownership of an iron mine in the hills and a sawmill on the nearby West Branch of the Susquehanna River. Everything of which the house was constructed was secured or manufactured on his property, including the bricks which have endured to this day. Knox, a direct descendant of the John Knox who founded the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was himself an Anglican and was founder of Trinity Episcopal Church of Jersey Shore in 1830. A prominent figure in the early days of Lycoming County, Knox helped build the state road from then independent Newberry to the New York state line.

The house changed hands numerous times and fell into complete disrepair until it was purchased by Morris Housel and his wife in 1944. It took the Housels three years and a sizeable outlay of capital to restore the house to its former lustre—sanding, finishing, and polishing the pegged floors, and replastering the hand-hewn laths.

The handsome eagle hanging over the entrance was carved in the 1940's by William Dittmar.¹ One of the most impressive features of the interior is the magnificent stairway

¹ William Dittmar was the founder of the Crooks-Dittmar Company, now Cromar Flooring Company, in Williamsport.



This photograph vividly shows the extent to which the Housels carried the restoration work in order to assure the home's ultimate authenticity.

which rises to the third floor. Its cherry hand rail (wood for this, too, was secured from the grounds) was sent to Harrisburg before installation to be molded and bent with steam pressure. On the first floor the dining room is to the left; its fireplace has a panel carved by Mr. Dittmar. The large walk-in fireplace in the adjoining kitchen adds to the feeling of the great warmth of the house.

The living room, to the right of the entrance, was formerly two rooms. The carved fireplace mantels and intricate cornice plasterwork are outstanding features of this room's restoration. Also of interest are the porches across the rear of the house on both stories.

The John Knox House can be doubly appreciated when seen from a distance; its handsome features are further enhanced by the natural beauty of the surrounding land. A barn, which predates the house by two years, completes the home's pastoral setting.



Springside

PASSERSBY ON FIFTH AVENUE in Williamsport are frequently attracted to Springside by the colorful jockey boy hitching post which once stood at the curbside of the John B. Otto residence (now the Ross Club). Two black, cast iron whippet dogs on either side of the thirty-foot-wide stone steps leading into the house and a graceful cast iron fountain on the lawn enhance the feeling that one is about to enter the home of a Southern gentleman.

The original homestead was a four-room structure built of logs in 1803 by Cornelius Woodward, who moved from New Orleans to Natchez before finally settling in Williamsport. With him he brought Southern tastes and a particular fondness for Natchez-style architecture which influenced the design of his home. In later years, Mr. Woodward added fifteen rooms to the original four.

Cornelius Woodward had several daughters, one of whom, Dewing, became a well-known artist. The Metropolitan Museum of Art displays one of her paintings and several others hang in museums throughout the country. One of her watercolors graces a wall in the home today. Dewing did not develop this talent without effort; she almost was disowned by her family when she ran away to Paris to study art. While she lived in Williamsport, Miss Woodward used an upstairs room with a double window (probably added in the late 1860's) as her studio.

During the 1889 flood, many refugees sought shelter at the Woodward's, at which time the house was occupied by fifty-eight persons. More than two hundred horses were tied to the trees in the orchard just north of the house. Cows, too, owned by persons living in the lowlands, were pastured in a field to the south.



In the west end of the home is this 18th century kitchen. The fireplace is equipped for cooking with forestick and kettle and a "furnace" (oven) for the making of fruit butters and preparing the meats from the winter slaughtering.

In 1945, the C. L. Glossers purchased the house from the Woodward estate. For many years, Mr. Glosser had admired this home and had offered to buy it. The will of Harriet Woodward stipulated that Mr. Glosser should have the first option to purchase it. When informed of this opportunity, he acted upon it at once and then began efforts to restore the property to its pristine state. To accomplish this, he studied many of Dewing Woodward's drawings. On this basis, a one-time tool shed and machine shop at the rear of the house has been remodeled in an interesting and charming fashion. On the first floor were coal bins in which an entire winter's supply could be stored. Now, however, the shed has been transformed into a most attractive apartment with a pantry and dining room on the first floor and a living room and bedroom on the second.

In the process of restoring the home, Mr. Glosser erected the fountain which adorns the lawn in front of the house. He discovered that it was once a part of the Peter Herdic estate. The upper and lower sections were found in two separate places, and Mr. Glosser succeeded in bringing the two sections together in order that the fountain might appear as Peter Herdic had planned it.

Originally, the land was part of Deer Park, owned by William Hepburn, one-time state Senator and first President Judge of Lycoming County. In 1849, John Vanderbelt Woodward increased his landholdings to four hundred acres and re-named the home-stand Springside because of the many springs on the property. Today the home stands on an acre of the land and is surrounded by terraced lawns and many of the same trees that shaded the home when it was new. One of these is a magnificent cooper beech tree. This tree, planted by Mrs. Cornelius Woodward in 1802, is according to the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters, one of a very few in the commonwealth and is likely the largest to be found anywhere. Its unusual size and fully developed shape are attributed to its being nurtured by one of the underground springs.

Nathaniel Burrow's House

"Let me live in a house by the side
of the road and be a friend to man,"

... SINGS THE POET, and this was the desire of Nathaniel Burrows (son of General John Burrows) who in 1833 built the first brick home in Montoursville. We do not know who the architect was, but we can appreciate his skill which is apparent in every feature of this house. Its style of architecture, we are told, is not pure Colonial because no house having its general characteristics was built in Pennsylvania prior to 1824.

The fifteen-inch-thick exterior walls are Flemish bond brick consisting of an alternating runner and header; this form is rarely used today because of material and labor costs. Cast iron lintels remain over the windows. The iron stars which are visible on the exterior of the house between the first and second stories are decorative ends of very practical iron bars which are necessary to support the stress of the roof in order that the walls not bulge.

The roof is a "T" in form with a Palladian window beneath each of the two gables. The glass came from the Lewis Glass Factory in Eagles Mere; insulated in straw and carefully packed in barrels, it was brought down the mountains by muleback. One of these windows figures in an interesting story about the Burrows family. Cornelia Burrows was given a pet fawn by an admirer. It lived at the house until one day it became alarmed, darted over the porch in to the hallway and ran up the stairway to the third floor, whereupon it leaped through the open Palladian window breaking its precious neck in the yard below. We are told its mistress was inconsolable.



Original appearance and location of the Nathaniel Burrows Home on the Big Road (now Broad Street, Montoursville). The shutters added to the excellent proportions of the building. Note the Palladian window on the third floor.



Of special interest is the hospitable front door, one of the finest colonial doorways in the Eastern United States. A former owner who bought the house for a mere \$2,200 was offered \$1,000 for this doorway alone. Its beautiful features consist of four finely fluted columns with sidelights between, plus a handsome fan of glass arching across the top. The design is attributed to Benjamin Potts of Muncy; two other elegant doorways he designed are still to be seen on Main Street in Muncy.

The staircase in the front hall once rose majestically to the attic; it was open all the way with wide landings and rail posts in the best Colonial tradition. A journeyman stair builder was especially employed by the Burrows and his apprentice, John S. Konkle, fooled the craftsman into divulging his carefully guarded trade secrets. Each evening, the journeyman deliberately kicked wood shavings from the day's labors over his "blueprint" drawings marked on the floor. Later that evening, his young helper would return with a lantern, and proceed to sweep the shavings aside, copy the drawings, and put the shavings back. This hide and seek went on until the stairway was completed without raising the suspicions of the older workman. His plans were now in the possession of his apprentice who went on to build many excellent stairways in the area.

Originally there were six fireplaces in the house, one for each major room. Those in the parlor and living room had mantels of smoky marble from Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, without which no fireplace was complete among the more pretentious homes of the Eastern Seaboard.

After its completion, the Burrows home became at once the center of social and community life, reflecting the prestige of the family which it sheltered. It held Montoursville's first piano, set of china dishes, and that marvel of modern living, an iron bathtub with plumbing.

The Burrows family sold the house to William Champian, Esq. in 1917. Nearly half a century later, in 1957, an oil company bought part of the property where the house stood. Elizabeth Champian King, rather than relinquish her lovely home, decided to move the house to the north of the lot. After much skepticism, the six hundred ton house was successfully moved and turned ninety degrees from its original position. The move took fourteen weeks to complete instead of the estimated six, and the fee was \$9,000. The Kings lived in the house during the entire moving process.

Although effort has been made to keep the famous house, its appearance today is somewhat sad. On the exterior, shutters which once balanced the proportions of the house have been removed; the interior now has been broken up into apartments. Nevertheless, we are fortunate that the home's architectural uniqueness has been preserved, and that we can still see in it reminders of its happier past.



The George Bennet Farm — Figures appearing in this lithograph from Stewart's History of Lycoming County of 1876 portray members of the Bennet family.

The George Bennet Farm

SET IN A GROVE OF TWENTY SPECIES OF TREES, the George Bennet Farm has attracted attention for years—especially since it was pictured in Stewart's 1876 History of Lycoming County. Built by George Bennet (a supervisor of the West Branch Canal at the beginning of the lumber era) between 1840 and 1844, it is an excellent example of constant maintenance and preservation.

The house is basically Georgian with some Greek Revival details. The brick originally painted white is now painted in a colonial yellow. There were ten rooms handsomely finished with natural pine, complimented by random width floors and eleven and one-half feet ceilings. A wall between the original parlor and sitting rooms has been removed, making a large, rather formal living room. The entrance hall leads to a hand-carved walnut railing whose staircase rises boldly to the third floor.

The house remained generally as built until 1929 when Mrs. Howard Janney bought the farm. She had an architect plan and build additional rooms to allow duplex accommodations. The renovation included two kitchens and a side porch. There are now two families living in this home without any evidence on the exterior.

The barn and silo were rebuilt in 1929 after the originals were destroyed by fire. All the farm buildings and tenant house are painted colonial yellow to harmonize with the house.

The farm's present owners, Mr. and Mrs. George Hunter, have devoted much time and energy in maintaining its beauty.

Mr. Hunter's skill in furniture making has added to the general charm of his home. The early American-type furniture he makes is authentically built and appropriately finished. Many of these reproductions are displayed in the Hunter home.



One of the examples of Mr. Hunter's expert ability in making reproductions of early American furniture is this fine desk which is authentic in every detail.

This graceful stairway with its hand-carved mahogany railing epitomizes the attention the owners have given to the home to preserve its fine qualities. The stairway, with its wide treads, is oval in form.



The home of the Bennet Farm as it is today.



The Residence of George W. Youngman and family circa 1876.

The Youngman Home

FACED WITH THE NEEDS of a large family of nine children, George Washington Youngman in 1865 decided to establish a country home west of Lycoming Creek. A prominent Williamsport attorney, Mr. Youngman was the eldest son of Elias P. and Amelia Antes Youngman (a daughter of J. Henry Antes, Jr.).

The two hundred acre property he purchased was sub-divided into lots and, as the city grew, the land eventually came under the jurisdiction of Williamsport. It was included in the Seventh Ward and was known as the Youngman Addition.

A tenant house and barn were the first two structures built in 1865. The main house, at the foot of Round Hill Road, was completed in 1867 and resembles an Italian Villa. It gives the appearance of a very elaborate urban house from its cupola (since removed) to its stately front entry. The sun-dried bricks used in the construction of the home were made on the property.

Characteristic of the Italian Villa Style are the comparatively flat overhanging roof, bracketed eaves, and quoined corners which resemble stepping stones. In fact, that is exactly the use to which they were put. The late Dr. Charles W. Youngman, father of the local surgeon, Charles L., and the attorney, John C., Sr., moved into the home at the age of nine. As he grew older and stayed out later, he used the "quoined corners" as a means of access to his bedroom to avoid arousing his parents. It is assumed that he learned this trick from his five older brothers.

The porch is the original and is probably one of the few remaining in Williamsport that so clearly illustrates the Italian Villa Style. The front door leads into a center hall with large, high-ceilinged rooms on either side. While it was a city house, it lacks the ornamental plaster work generally found in a residence of this style. Instead the house



The influence of the Italian Villa style during this period in the Victorian Era is most noticeable in this porch and entrance to the home.

was suited to the simpler needs of a rural family. The windows are protected on the inside by forling shutters.

Mr. Youngman's youth was spent in the Nippenose Valley in the vicinity of Lochabar. His father managed a farm and gristmill for his father-in-law, Mr. Antes. Upon the death of his father, he bought the family homestead on Antes Creek and organized the Nippenose Woolen Mills.

In 1863, the Youngman family lived in a home on Pine Street (present location of Harder's Sporting Goods Store). During this period of the Civil War, General Lee's invasion of the North had begun and troop trains were moving southeastward from the Sinnemahoning country. These troops were comprised of tough lumber jacks. Charlie Youngman, age five, and his brother, William, age nine, were playing at the Market Street Station (next to the Rialto Theater). A troop train pulled in; the troops were in cattle cars. Will shouted, "Take me along!" "Sure," shouted the troops, and they proceeded to haul Will aboard. Charlie grabbed Will's ankles, crying, "No, no." Will shouted, "Let me down, I'll fix him." The soldiers obeyed and Will planted his foot in the seat of Charlie's pants, sending him crying down Pine Street. Will went to war, becoming the lumberjacks' Captain's orderly. A pony was "liberated" in Maryland which the lad rode throughout the war. The family vainly tried to locate the nine year old. But, after Appomattox, Will returned home safe and sound but well experienced for a then lad of eleven. Two of Will's brothers also served during the Civil War; they entered the army at the ages of sixteen and fourteen.

In 1868 there was very little agitation for control of firearms. George Youngman had defended a man charged with murder. The fee was a Kentucky rifle, bored for shot as a muzzle loader. Charlie, the youngest son, received this gun as a gift at the age of ten. His father, said, "Now, Charlie, I don't think you can get at both ends of this gun at the same time." But, this did not take into consideration "delayed fire." One day, Charlie aimed at a sitting grouse while hunting behind the Youngman homestead. Nothing happened, so Charlie, who was wearing a broad brimmed straw hat, put the stock of the gun on the ground and taking the barrel in both hands, pulled it toward him so that he could look down the muzzle to see why it had failed to go off. Suddenly, Boom! Off went the brim of Charlie's hat. For the rest of his life Charlie carried the marks of the powder burns on his face.

The Youngman home remained a single-family dwelling until the depression of the 1930's when it became a two-family residence, with an apartment on the second floor. The land was farmed until that time as well; since then the barn has been used for storage.

Surrounding the Youngman homestead are newer houses and businesses, too, competing for the viewer's attention. Nevertheless, this home's quality of construction and tasteful aging still command the visitor's respect.

Mortar and stone alone do not always justify a home's value; it is frequently the character of the family and its imprint on the history of the community that lends the home its unique charm.



The overhanging roof, the bracketed eaves, and quoined corner as well as the ornate moldings above the windows exemplify the Italian Villa Style.



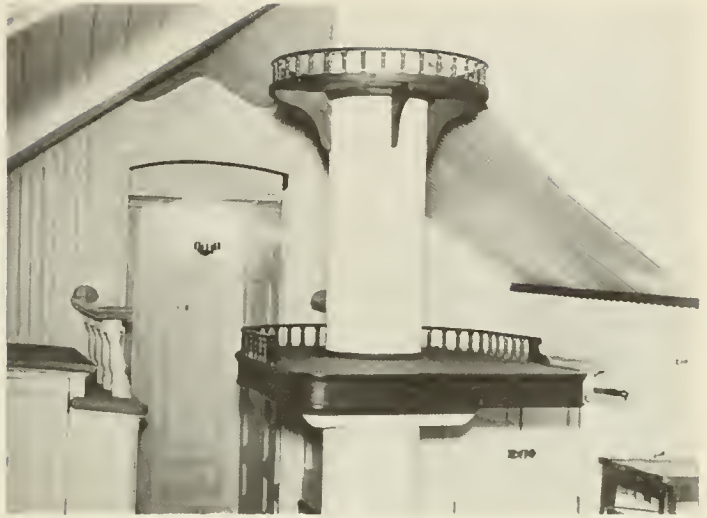
Wyno Farms

NESTLED AMONG MAGNIFICENT BEECH TREES is the gracious brick home of Wyno Farms. Near Hall's Station, this land was once part of the Samuel Wallis estate. In 1867, Margaret Hall and her husband, the Reverend D. R. Dickinson, of New York City, built this house which they named "Margaret Hall." The Dickinson's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, also married a New York minister, the Reverend A. D. Lawrence Jewett, who held church services under the large Beech in the east yard.

The house then became known to local residents as the "Jewett Mansion" and it was used strictly as a summer home by the owners. Charles and George Stearns purchased the house in 1912. The Stearns added a front and side porch, and built a barn, though the home remained as a summer retreat for them. It is said that they never stayed overnight but would travel there from Williamsport, spend the afternoon sitting on the porches, and then make the long journey back.

In 1925, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Munson purchased the property from Douglas Smith, who had begun renovating it. Mr. Munson was an attorney in Williamsport, while Mrs. Munson—nee Louise Franchot—was from an Olean, New York, oil family. She had been responsible for the interior decorating of the Governor's mansion in Harrisburg. With this background and knowledge, she set about building and rebuilding the old house. The new look began with the name Wyno, an Indian word whose meaning is somewhere between "good luck" and "welcome." The grounds, designed by a New York landscape architect, included a large stone terrace extending from the east porch to a small formal garden complete with an enchanting tea house. Hand-carved mahogany pillars, obtained from a church in Guatemala, were used to construct this tea house. The bell beside it came from a South American monastery.

The ship's cabin bedroom was one of Mrs. Edgar Munson's intriguing additions to the home at Wyno Farms.



The Tea House — set in the formal garden.



One of many outstanding features of the home is the unique ship's cabin located between the second and third floors. A naval architect was called in to supervise the construction of the "bedroom." Trimmed in mahogany, with floors of teak, complete with bunks and sliding door hatch, the visitor is at once attracted to the main mast and attached captain's desk. These are believed to have been part of Captain Horatio Nelson's quarters in his flagship at the battle of Trafalgar.

Mrs. Munson was influenced by many styles and brought them together in her home. Her style of combining can be seen in the stairwell. The center hall, with its elegant free-hanging spiral walnut staircase which soars upwards three stories, was copied from the Vanderbilt Mansion. Imported marble was used generously to encase tubs and sinks. The powder room wall panels are thought to be from Marie Antoinette's boudoir. The carved Italian marble fireplace in the living room was purchased from an English estate.



Viewed from above, the elegance and design of this free-hanging spiral walnut staircase can be appreciated.

As well as constructing a butler's pantry, the Munsons built a two-story addition; a living room containing nearly one thousand square feet, furnished as an indoor Italian Renaissance garden, and above it a bedroom and bath.

Murals, two and one-half feet high, which depict the preparation of a feast in "merry old England," appear on the upper walls of the butlers pantry and kitchen. These oil paintings were done by Ross Parke, who used people working on the farm at that time as subjects. Mr. Parke, whose studies at the School of Fine Arts, Yale University, are said to have been financed by Mrs. Munson, has been elected to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of England. Prince Phillip serves as president of this group whose membership is limited to forty persons.

After all this work, the house stood vacant for twelve years, until 1940, when Dr. Roy Simon purchased it. No further additions were made until 1945, when Congressman and Mrs. Alvin R. Bush bought the house. Finding the place badly in need of repairs, the Bush family gave the home a major facelifting. Several barns were built and the acreage increased from sixty to three hundred. It now supports a large dairy herd and is one of the outstanding working farms in this area. This continues despite suburban expansion and a nearby industrial plant. The present owners are assemblyman and Mrs. Alvin C. Bush.



The Gibson Farm — Located in Nisbet, facing the Long Reach of the Susquehanna.

The Gibson Farm

OF ALL THE FARM HOUSES in our immediate area, the one built by John Gibson in 1865 has been considered the most pleasing to the eye. It is basically Greek Revival with Italian-Villa overtones. The iron work outside, for example, and the shift from a center hall plan inside both indicate the Italian influence. The year 1865 is a late date for construction of a house of this style, but the rural location—remote from new influences—probably explains the anachronistic design. The house seems to be unique in design, for no other has been found that resembles it.

The step gables are a feature not generally associated with Greek Revival architecture; they usually are found in urban vernacular Federal or Georgian structures. One gable on the west side has been extensively repaired with new brick. Some of the house's many chimneys have flues but only one fireplace was ever installed.

The original bricks were not fired but were sun dried. As a result, they collected moisture and mold resulted. A silicone coating now protects them as well as the interior because the walls are plastered directly on the bricks.

The basic floor plan is cruciform and there is an exceptional master bedroom in the front of the second floor with windows facing North, East, and West.

The farm was one of the earliest tracts of land developed on the West Branch frontier. It was patented when the land office opened in 1769 and the land was cleared several years later. A family graveyard on the land dates back to 1775, predating the house by ninety years.

In the 1889 flood, a valuable horse was taken to the second floor for safety and its hoof prints may still be seen on the wooden stair treads. There are other vivid reminders of the flood such as water marks three feet high on some walls.

The farm was sold to John Coryell Hays in 1940. In the process of refurbishing the house Mr. Hays removed all the window sashes and reset them because the wind whistled through the gaps—so badly had the house been neglected.

In 1964, the farm was bought by the Howard Plankenhorn family. The house is undergoing remodeling to accommodate modern conveniences within its framework.



Hermance House — A monument to the days when Williamsport was the lumber capital of the world and to when its millionaires were inspired to build homes that were visible proof of this wealth.

The Hermance House

ONE OF THE STRUCTURES which best illustrates Williamsport in its glorious lumber days is the mansion built for Albert Dubois Hermance. One of Williamsport's millionaires, he founded the Hermance Machine Company which manufactured wood-working machines.

When Peter Herdic went bankrupt in 1878, the side yards of his home were sold; it was then that Albert Hermance bought the east side yard upon which he built this home. Constructed in 1885, it is a three-story castle-like stone structure of Richardsonian and Romanesque architecture. The style was very popular at that time in Chicago and Boston.¹ The architect was Eber Culver, a local man who had gone west in search of gold, but came back in the early 1850's and started designing homes. Besides the Hermance house, he also designed and built Peter Herdic's,² the Park Home, and Trinity Episcopal Church.

¹ The Richardsonian and Romanesque style of architecture was developed by H. H. Richardson and Richard Morris Hunt; it was primarily based on the Romanesque style.

² Herdic's house (not to be confused with the Herdic House, as the Park Home or Park Hotel was then called) is the westerly neighbor to Hermance's.

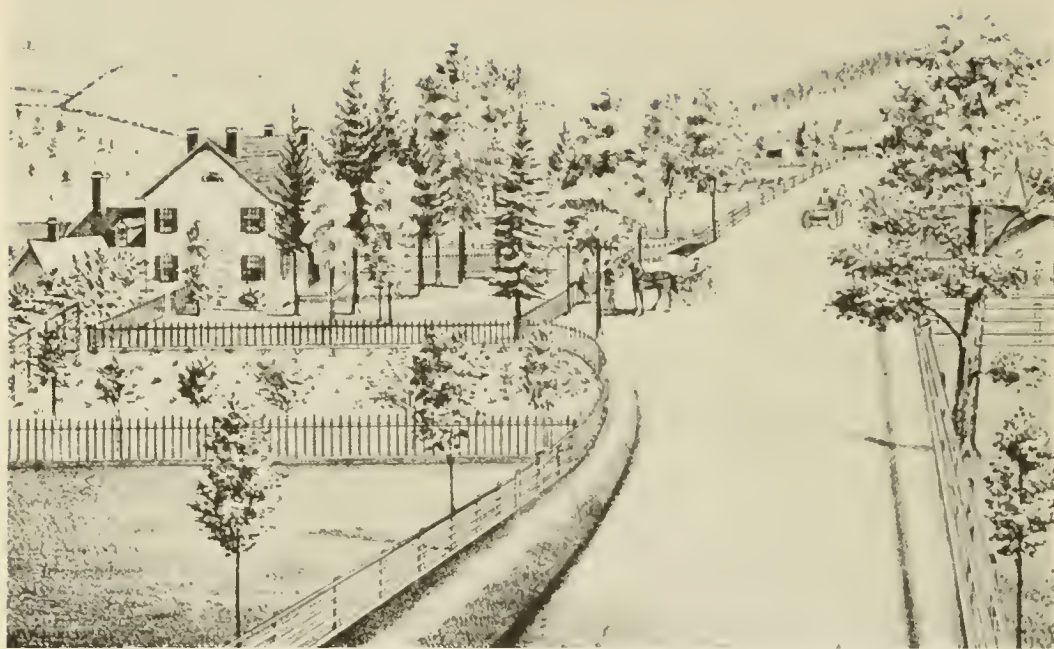


The superb craftsmanship of Giovanni Ferrari is evident in the ornately carved mahogany balustrade in the foyer. Hand craft, now a lost art, were used in stairways, moldings, wainscoting, doorways to create that distinctive touch in each home that would reflect the personality and prestige of the owner.

The outstanding feature of the structure is its beautiful hand-carved doors, staircase and woodwork made of the choicest lumber by Giovanni Ferrari. All of these carvings are still in their original form. Of special distinction also are its three fireplaces and chandeliers which once were gas but now are electric. The home also contains a hidden staircase which then led to the servants' quarters. The porch on the east side of the house is not in keeping with the overall design of the home; Eber Culver was not at his best when designing porches.

At the rear of the house, on what is known as "Snake Alley" (Center Place), horses and carriages were once housed. With their stabled tenants gone, these buildings are now converted to apartments. In 1932, the property was sold to John C. Winter, who remodeled the main house into eleven apartments. In 1953, Al Ferrari, a local restaurateur (not related to Giovanni) purchased the building. Mr. Ferrari has done much to keep the house as much as possible in its original state, although it is still an apartment building,³ thus maintaining in this imposing structure a noteworthy example of Williamsport's "Gilded Age."

³ One of the residents of the Hermance house after it was converted into apartments was William Dittmar. He was the last local woodcarver and knew Giovanni Ferrari. Dittmar carved the signs which now hang over each entrance to the Hermance House, identifying it as the Ferrari Apartments.



The Charles L. Lyon Farm—lithograph from Stewart's History of Lycoming County of 1876. On the Loyalsock road and near the village of Farragut once existed a very self-sufficient farm. All manner for the means of survival was achieved here. Ploughed fields, corn, and groves of maple trees surrounded the Georgian house.

The Charles L. Lyon Farm

IN 1967, THE ROY L. WENNERS saved this home from its fate of slow decay. For twenty-seven years they had dreamed of owning it and today that dream and the preservation of the remarkable brick home will be assured.

The house is more than just another old home to many Lycoming County residents. It was a familiar sight when driving in horse and buggy along the Loyalsock. For eight years it has endured being vacant and yet the structure is reasonably sound. Our forefathers had less and for that reason demanded more in the construction of their homes that were meant to house large families and to weather well the storms and suns of many years. Properly dried brick and white pine held together with a mortar harder than cement was used in this home. There were no substitutes and, with the help of neighbors and expert craftsmen, one could, in time, build a house of this quality.

According to the Indenture in the Lycoming County Court House, John Peter Bastain sold fifty acres in Fairfield Township to his son, Henry, in 1844. The land exchanged hands again in 1845 to Jacob Weaver. It was during these years that descendants of the family believe the house was built. The nine over six windows and other architectural features of the Federal style of the home attest to this date.

The original log house which stood on part of the foundations of the present home was dismantled and moved to the top of the mountain in Upper Fairfield Township and there reassembled. It still stands just beyond The Church of the Good Shepherd and is owned and occupied by John Parke, Jr.



The home as it appeared in 1940 when it was owned by the Harry Keyte family.



Appearance of the Lyon home prior to restoration by the Roy L. Wenners tells its own sad story of neglect and disuse.

Jacob Weaver in turn sold this acreage to Doctor Charles Lloyd Lyon in 1861. This land adjoined a tract of land that was purchased previously by the Lyon family at public auction from the John Peter Bastain Estate. Dr. Lyon was a physician and practiced medicine in his newly acquired home. It was at this time that the house was remodeled and several rooms added, bringing the total to fifteen. There were dormer windows in the roof which have been removed.

Medicine seemed to be the chosen profession of the Lyon family, for Charles studied under his brother, Thomas Lyon, of Williamsport. He was graduated from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1842 at the age of twenty one. He practiced medicine in the district for fifty years. No night was too dark or storms or roads too hazardous to keep the genial doctor from answering a call. During the Civil War, Dr. Lyon held a commission as enrolling officer. He was one of the organizers of the Lycoming County Medical Society and the Agricultural Society.

In 1892, Charles Lloyd Lyon died and Mary Elizabeth Keyte, his daughter, became the owner. The house became vacant when her son, Robb, died in 1959.

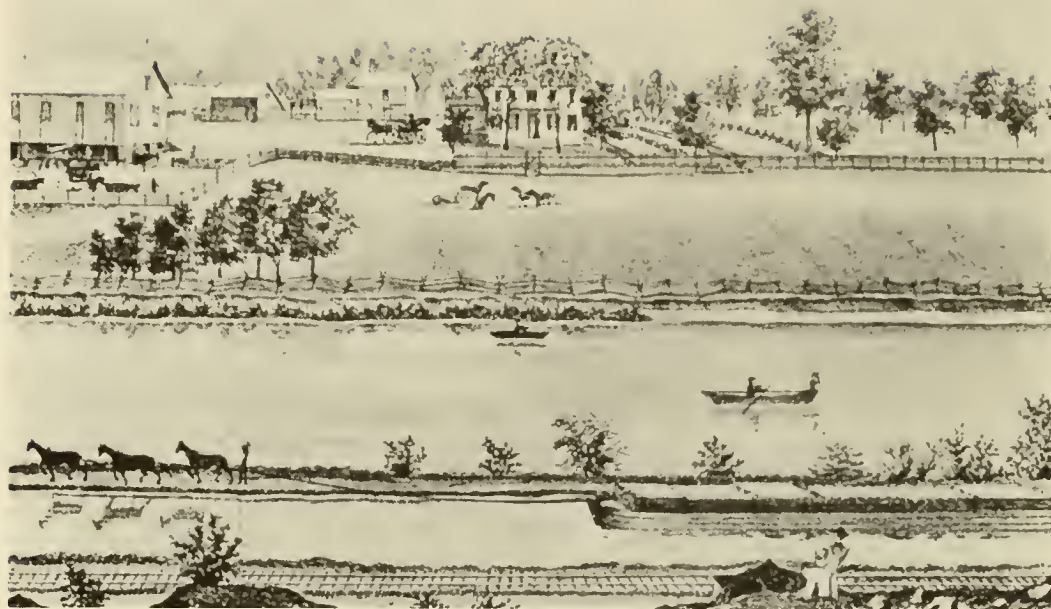
The Wenners, father and son, are facing extensive remodeling of this home. Their plans are to be as authentic as possible with the ideas and materials used in the restoration. They estimate the time period to be several years, until the home is completely restored. The brick will be repaired and cleaned, the roof replaced, and the fireplaces uncovered to expose the sun-dried brick; most of the chimneys will be rebuilt. Paneling, wainscoting and modern conveniences in the kitchen and baths will make the home suitable for twentieth century living. Restoration plans include the addition of white pillars across the front of the house and the dormers replaced in the roof—all creating an aura of new grandeur to The Georgian House, as the home will be known in the future. An antique shop uniquely adapted to the remodeled barn will complete the setting.

There is reassurance here in the surviving tranquility of old homes which have outlived the passions and prejudices, the fears and uncertainties of those who saw them rise and first dwelt in them.



The Stewart House

THOUGH THE LAND DEED DATES 1800, this home along the Susquehanna River near Antes Fort may have been built in 1800 or 1807. Shutters were nailed shut by the Jersey Shore Historical Society in the hope that someone would rescue and restore it. Almost a complete ruin, it was further devastated by a fire in 1967. Ghostly reminders of blue paint reflect some of its past beauty as a home. The fireplaces and all moldings and stair rails have been pillaged and the front door no longer closes to protect it from the elements.



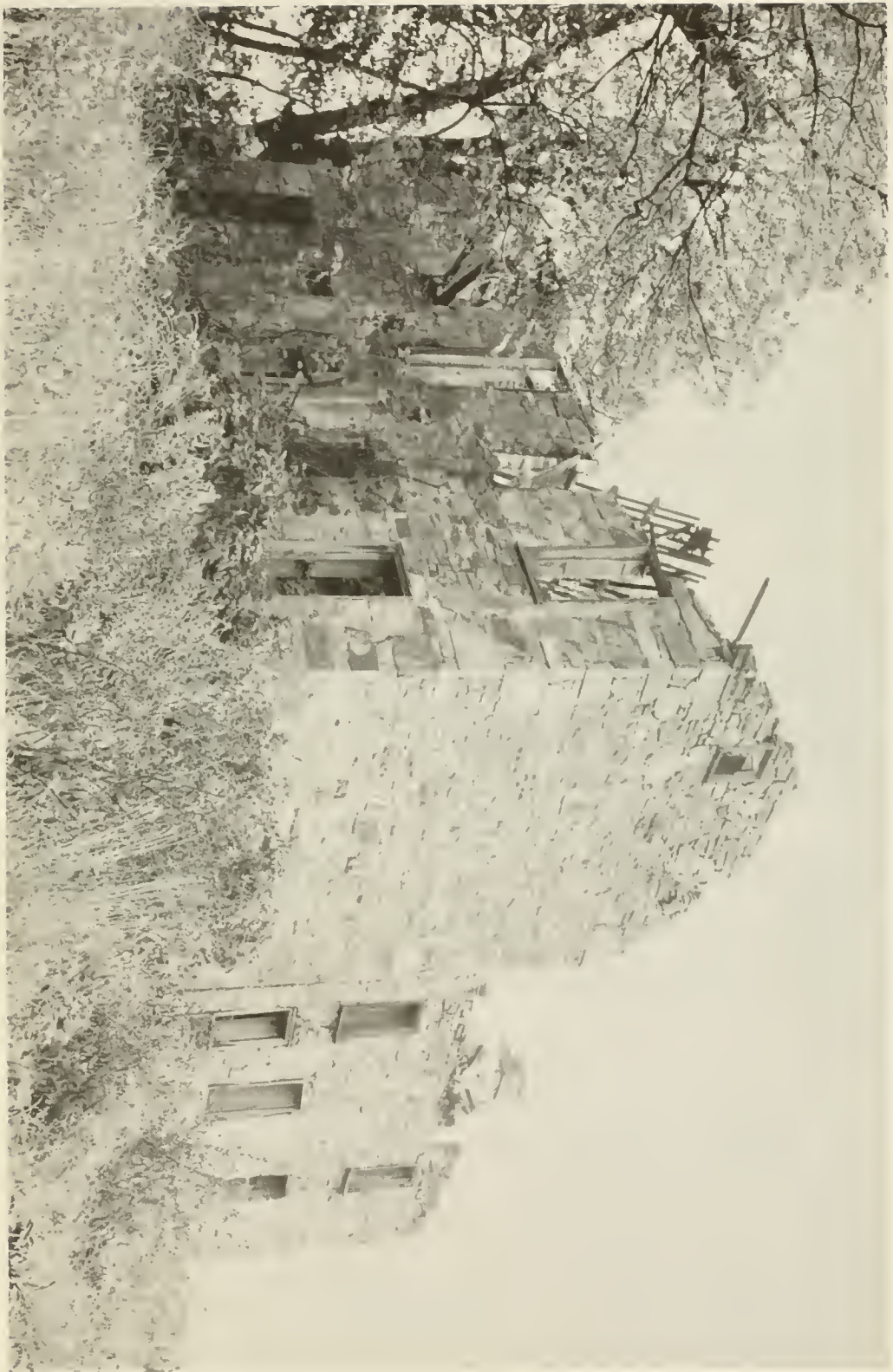
*Residence of James V. Crane and family built in 1776 as it appeared in
Stewart's History of Lycoming County 1876.*

The Crane House

THE SADDEST EXAMPLE of neglect and loss in this area is the Crane House. It is believed to have been built in 1776. This ensuing neglect is the result of a stipulation in a will of the Crane family which stated that the house could never be sold until the grandchildren came of age. We do not know all the circumstances—but waste through neglect is apparent.

The stone used to build this home was quarried in the field adjacent to the house and the expert masonry work still can be admired, especially in the dressed cornerstones.

Magnificent when built, yet now disintegrating in a corn field nearly two hundred years later—what a splendid treasure this home would have been had it been maintained.



The Ruins of the Crane Home.

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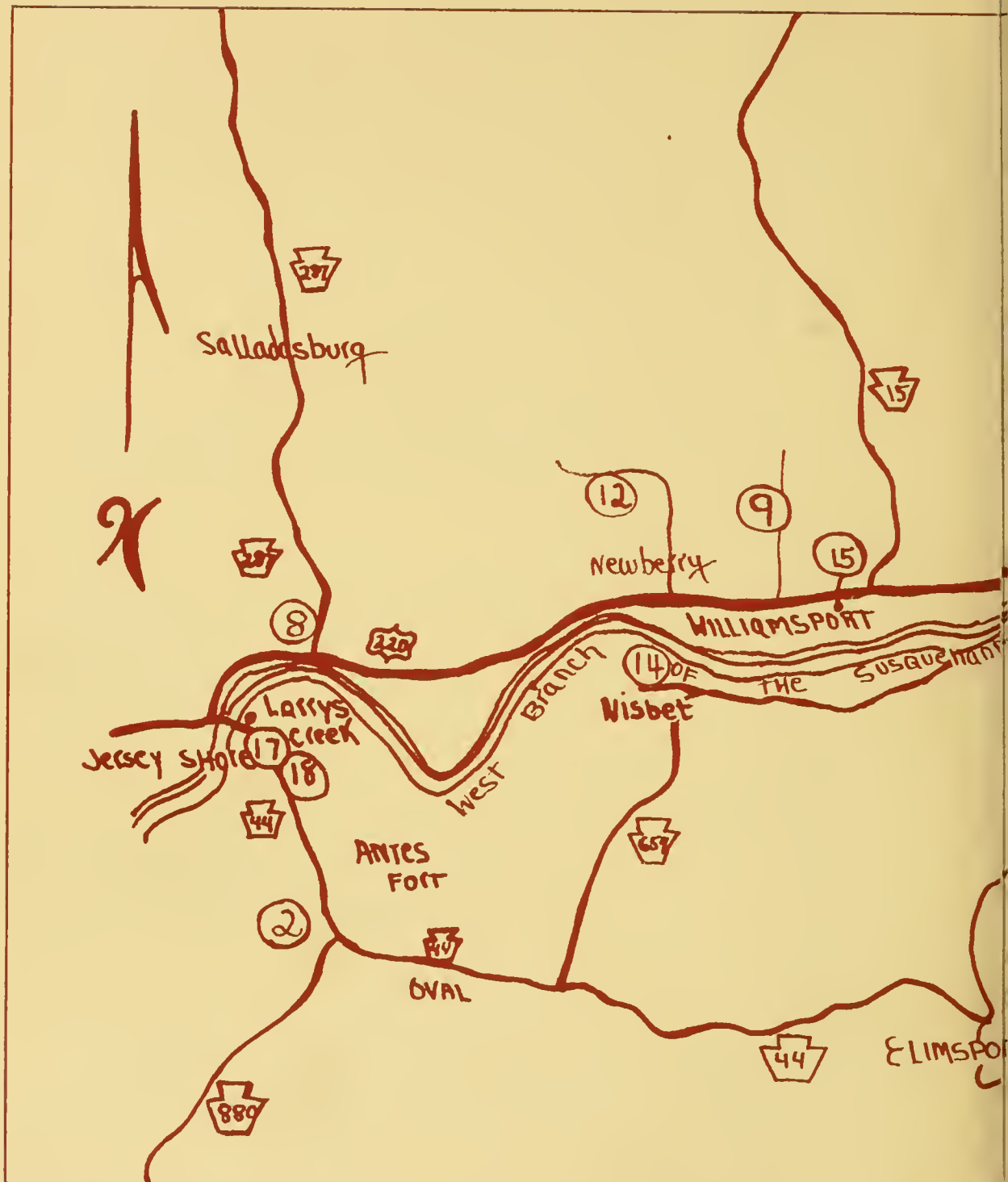
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Interviews

Mrs. Morris Housel
Samuel Dornsife

Mrs. Robert Cochrane
John Israel Smith



- 1—Muncy Farms—Longreach
- 2—Lochahar
- 3—The House of Many Stairs
- 4—Wolf Run House
- 5—Pennsdale Friends Meeting

- 6—Mendenhall
- 7—Rose Hill
- 8—The John Knox House
- 9—The Woodward House



- 10—The Nathaniel Burrows House
- 11—The George Bennet Farm
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- 14—The Gibson Farm
- 15—The Hermance House
- 16—The Charles L. Lyon Farm
- 17—The Stewart House
- 18—The Crane House

